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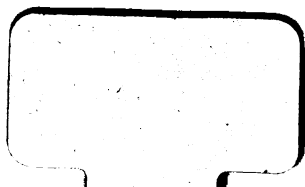
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A Reed By the River

Poems by

VIRGINIA WOODWARD CLOUD

Author of "Down Durley Lane"



Boston
RICHARD G. BADGER
The Gorham Press
1902

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TO MY FATHER AND MOTHER

*" All my heart
In this my singing."*

Browning.

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A REED BY THE RIVER

INTIMATION

As the sunlight finds the willow, whitening, trembling
 'neath its dart,
As the young moon on the meadow,—so is spring-
 time to the heart;
As the hush of tree-tops resting where the sky's red
 pulses start,
Ere a bud hath broken bondage,—so is springtime to
 the heart.

Mystery of boughs that show not bud nor blow nor
 any leaf;
Twilight solitudes that know not if awaiting joy or
 grief,
Dream that wakes not lest the morrow hold of pain
 its keener part,
Bliss, whose sweetest depth is sorrow—such is April
 to the heart.

SONGS

Singers of yore, sweet poets of any clime,
Players and minstrels all, whose lips are dust,
From the white heritage we reap of time,—
Hymns that smote flame from steel that now is rust,
Echoes blown down from an Arcadian hill
Or born of vigils tombed within that past,
Wrought of red hate or tuned to rapture's thrill,—
One strain outlives you, singing to the last;
We too, we too, one morn shall silent go,
The lute, the reed o'er which life's wind doth sweep,
And all our little day, its love and woe,
Cast forth, forgot if we did laugh or weep;
But singing hence some hour with passion rife
May live,—the soul of long forgotten strife.

THE BEGGAR'S HARP

*'Love shall live for its own sweet sake,
Song shall sing but for song alone,
All do they yield and nothing take,
Nor claim a part for their own.'* . . .

Out the gates in a vagabond way,
Love and I find pitiful fare;
Mayhap 'tis a crust of yesterday,
Or a sound of a voice on the air;

A smile that welcomes another's eyes,
The scent of a rose beyond the wall,
A rapture that never in words shall rise
And never in tears shall fall.

*' . . . Love shall live, though the star that gleams
Caught in thy tree-top high and bare,
Dies in the dark; but the dark hath its dreams
And the dreams, the dreams are fair! . . . '*

Forth to the night my face is set,
And cold are the fingers that strive to play—
(. . . *The shroud of the dew clings chill and yet,
But love is the ember that gloweth yet! . . .*)
Ay, and though song be forgot in a day,
Ay, and though none shall recall or regret,—
Singing, I take my way.

PALILIA

Still doth sweet Pales, through our April field
With ghostly shepherds glide, ere night be nigh;
Still purple mystery their torches yield,
Incense of olive, box and rosemary;
Ay, down dim Aprils still Narcissus flies,
With glimpse of yellow hair across the grass,
And the immortal blue of longing eyes,
Looks forth from every violet we pass:
Whilst even I, 'mid jar of noises rude,
May break Care's bond and speed a little span
Through fields of thought, find Echo's solitude,
And hear, far off, the thrilling pipe of Pan!

DUSK

Beyond the burning rhapsody of noon,
The wind's elusive harp-note in the trees,
Between the sunset and the primrose noon,
There is a rapture all unknown of these,—
The harmony of twilight, Nature's note,
Prolonged, pellucid, subtler far than song,
Bearing the lifted soul till it doth float
Upon the heart of night and find it strong;
Against this bar the tides of tumult fail
And waves slip back into a silent deep;
The world, beneath a white and windless sail,
Drifts outward to the vaster sea of sleep,
And thought, starlike, doth rise above Time's shoal
To find thee still—thou starlight of my soul!

THE MOTHER'S SONG

"Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken and the other left."

All day and all day as I sit at my measureless turning,
They come and they go,—
The little ones down on the rocks,—and the sunlight
is burning
On vineyards below;
All day and all day, as I sit at my wheel and am
ceaselessly grinding
The almond boughs blow.

When she was here—O my first-born!—here, grind-
ing and singing,
My hand against hers,
What did I reckon of the wind where the aloe is swing-
ing
And the cypress vine stirs?
What of a bird to its little ones hastening, crying and
flying
Through the dark of the firs?

When she was here—O my beautiful!—here by me
grinding,
I saw not the glow
Of the grape; for the bloom of her face that the sun-
light was finding,
And the pomegranate blow
Of her mouth, and the joy of her eyes, and her voice
like a dove to me singing
Made my garden aglow.

Was it I? Was it I for whom Death same seeking
and calling

When he found her so fair?

At the wheel, at the wheel, from dawn till the dew
shall be falling

I will wait for him there.

Death! (I shall cry) I am old, but yon shadow of
plums that are purpling

Was the hue of her hair.

Death! (I shall cry) in the sound of the mill ever
turning

Till dark brings release,

Till the sun on the vineyards below me to crimson
is burning

There is measure of peace,

For all day and all day, with the wheel, are her eyes
to mine turning,

But Death! (I shall call) take me hence ere the day-
light its shadow is spurning

Hence ere the night-time can wrap me around with
my tears and my yearning,—

When the grinding shall cease!

CARE

All in the leafy darkness, when sleep had passed me
by,
I knew the surging of the sea—
Though never wave were nigh.
All in the leafy darkness, unbroken by a star,
There came the clamorous call of day,
While yet the day was far.
All in the leafy darkness, woven with hushes deep,
I heard the vulture wings of Fear
Above me tireless sweep;
The sea of doubt, the dread of day, upon me surged
and swept
All in the leafy darkness,—
And while the whole world slept.

AFTER DAY

Though I go forth, I face the dark with singing;
Think not that for Love's sake life starves of song,
That which thou canst not give may yet be bringing
Bread to the soul, and wine that maketh strong.

Love is the manna that grows great with giving;
Be thine the gift, but mine the endless store,
Pain, the keen note that thrills to fuller living
Calls to the soul across a boundless shore.

Into the night I go but not without thee,
Though nevermore beside me while I sing;
The splendor of the stars is round about me
And with the dawn life mounts on higher wing!

OF THE SEA

Let us go down to the sea, ere the noisy day be
over,
Let us go down to the sea, and strip us of care and
of toil;
There are graves in the heart of man that only the
sea can cover,
There are deeds in the life of man to be sown as
the deep sea spoil.

Flee from the surging of sound, that urges us on to
the morrow,
Wrest from the merciless round that returns with
the birth of the sun,
Free us of harassing thought, and the wind's wild
pinion borrow,
Yet there is room for the heart where the wind and
the wave are born.

And the grief which lieth behind let us give to the
grace of forgetting,
And the faith that is dimmed let us shrive with the
clean, keen salt of the sea,
And the fruitless doubt let us fling beyond the bound
of regretting,
Where only the wave and the sky and the soul of
man may be.

Earth, the mother hath balm for her world-stained
sons and daughters,
Earth, the mother, hath balm for her toil-spent hearts
and sad,
Time cannot curb nor deny God's bountiful boon of
waters,—
Let us down to the sea, my soul, let us down to the
sea and be glad!

PRELUDE

Not with the maddening tumult of the wind
That sweeps with unresisting impulse rife,
Nor fiercer flame that leaves sad waste behind,
But softly would I move along thy life;
As 'mid still eloquence of woodland maze
We stay the step, and silently pass nigh
Where the imprisoning hush of twilight ways
Shrines, dryadlike, the heart of Mystery,
Lest the spell break we tread not all too near,
But steal with trembling breath dim paths along—
Finding the shadow than all light more dear,
Finding the hush more sweet than any song;
Thus, at its portal, 'twixt thy soul and strife,
I would move softly, love, along thy life.

TO A POET

The pipe of one undying river reed
Borne down on myriad summers' magic breath
Wakes to thy playing, the immortal seed
Of Eden's rose, through gates of life and death,
Blooms in thy song; to make thy fragile mood
The loves of gods were slain and mortals died;
A thousand dawns are thrilling in thy blood,
A thousand darks are blackly multiplied
In thy despair; a thousand souls their tears,
Their passions pour through time to thine;
Thy heart is heritage of all the years
That fed upon Elysian oil and wine;—
Then with no lesser fare of love keep tryst,
Lest the lips starve where gods have warmly kist.

POSSESSION

This, this alone, we keep: Memory, fraught
With sweet or bitter fruit of seed flung hence;
Pain's quickened sight; Love, of strong service
wrought,
And knowledge born of wise Obedience.

SUCCESSION

A wild mood from the windy sea,
The thrall of white foam over me,
As if the gods laughed once again,
Dared life to drink of love and pain!

I could have flown to their embrace,
Met Death and mocked him, face to face;—
Mayhap 'twas where old loves had met,
And a dead fisher cast his net.

Within the silence of the wood,
Strange shadow spun its spell and mood;
A power called and baffled where
The hush of mystery filled the air.

Alien, yet one, my steps did seem
To break upon a mighty dream,—
Perchance, beneath my feet, some brave,
The woods' dead sovereign had his grave.

THROUGH THE FIELDS

Come, my dear, we'll go a-wandering, a-wandering
we'll go,
While the sun upon the fields is lying red,
The sky is like a dove-wing, the woods are black
below,
And the brier in a net of bloom is spread.

Has heart of day an odor like the dewy evening air
That blows across the clover and the thorn?
And is there yet a sound, that for silence can com-
pare
With the rustle, rustle, rustle of the corn?

Shall ever glow a memory or ever gleam a star,
Though myriads arise for you and me,
That shall welcome us and beckon us and follow us
afar,
Like the shining of yon star above the tree?
Come, my dear,—we'll go a-wandering adown the
dawning years;
Beyond this eve there's many a waiting morn,—
But through the din the tumult, the broken dream,
the fears,
We shall hear the rustle, rustle of the corn;—
The soft and scented twilight, the hush, too deep for
tears,
In the rustle, rustle, rustle of the corn.

LOVE'S LENITY

From the sweet hazard of my deep desire
Thy heart may fly upon evasive wing;
For me, the silent shade, the smouldering fire,
The echo of the song that thou shalt sing;
For thee, perchance far purple vineyards burn,
And raptures of a radiant noon await,
Speed then at will,—but find at thy return,
My heart, thy sentinel at twilight's gate;
By that immeasurable bond, the thread
Of love, a willing captive held am I;
By that same bond,—be the world's bounty spread
As thy fair feast,—my heart doth bid thee fly;
For this glad mystery is wrought in me,
Forever am I bound, whilst thou art free!

TO LOVE

If thou wouldst taste each dear surprise,
Tear not the bandage from thine eyes,
Within the heart Love's vision lies.

Dim thou the groping, mortal sight,
Ere doubt can blind or fear can blight;
Love's arrow is his spirit's flight.

Lest longing be more sweet than gain,
Possession prove less keen than pain,
The sun more blinding be than rain,

Lest thou shouldst miss Love's dear surprise,
Seeking to probe each mood's disguise,—
Tear not the bandage from thine eyes.

THE GOSPEL OF LOVE

Let me but feed on frugal fare
So manna may be thine;
Let me strip the vines and press them bare
That thou shalt taste of wine,
Ay, though I have no crust to share,
If thou find first-fruit everywhere,
The fuller harvest mine.

LOVE LOOKED BACK

Love looked back from the Place of the Star
And whispered thus to me,—
Ay, though it travelled so faint and far
Love's face I could not see,
Through the world's unceasing jar
I knew that it was he,—

"Sing the song that is mine and thine,
Though none may harken to know;
Here, where my watch-fires constant shine
And blossoms of white dreams blow,
Past the surging of bitter brine
The meaning of song shall go.

Though from flame unto icy spar
No voice may echo thee,
Deep in the solitudes that are
Where swallows of thought dart free,
In the heart of cool blue calms afar
The meaning of song shall be!"—
*Love looked back from the Place of the Star
And whispered thus to me.*

IN THE WOODS

The dryads are not dead
Nor satyrs fled;
Today within the wood
Their sovereign stood,
Vital, erect, with gnarled and out-thrust arms
Inviting expectation's old alarms.

Perchance in the wind's way
A summons lay;
Or a bird's keener throat
The piercing note
Of echoes long since dead it had
That called to life, to love, to tumult mad.

With the dawn's kindling fire,
Or day's red pyre,
Once more the old sap heard,
Thrilled deep and stirred,
And straightway from the silent heart it crept
Through the sere veins for ages that have slept,

Crying; "*Awake! Behold!*"
The stalwart pines and old,
The kingly oaks and high,
Did writhe and sigh
Rent with mute longing and the imprisoned pain
Of dreaming broke, of memory again.

AUTUMN SONG

Wrap us round, O mother Autumn, with a silence all
unbroken,
With the royal purple semblance of a passion all
unspoken,
While the bird of life wings backward, with the red-
dening, waning day,
To a thrill of long-lost laughter, to a love that could
not stay!

Now the spirits of all lost things, softly, silently have
found us,
Stealing through the gold and grayness, through the
prisoned flame around us,
And the weary heart within us awakens fearfully
again,
To the old, exquisite measure, to the long-forgotten
pain.

Now the savage child within us leaps the thicket,
flying faster,
Barefoot through the voiceless forest, threading fern
and leaf and aster,
Leaping brook and laughing upward, where the
broken blue beguiles,
Speeding on,—O heart, fly faster!—down the light of
memory's aisles!

Now the scent of grape and hollow stirs the sense
and fans the ember,
And wind above the waiting sheaves is whispering
"Remember!"
O now, the heart of memory's rose burns reddest
'gainst the gray,
And the bird of life wings backward to the love that
could not stay!

A BIRD SONG

The soul of strife hath burst its bars
And on exultant wings
Amid the immortal field of stars
Behold, it sings!

And thou, O tuneless heart of Care,
Stronger than earth is strong,
Doth not thy pain escape its snare
And rise in song?

A VIGIL

Is it nothing to you?
The harvest is over, the summer is past;
Love that lived for your sake, in the chill and the dew
Lies stricken at last.
Love for you that was born,
Smiteth blind at the dark
Yet fain would shun light;
Love that sang in the morn hath a pillow of thorn
And is one with the night.

Is it nothing to you?
Full, full were the lees with rapture and pain;
Love starved where your vineyards in plentitude
grew,
Love thirsted, the Marah of tears did he drain;
Turn his face to the dark, set his lips to the dew,
On, on in the dawn with his heart smitten through,—
It is nothing to you.

CRONIES

Love came in with me to sup,
Though the hour were late;
Stopped my wheel, and brimmed my cup,
At the hearthstone state;
Kissed mine eyes and bade me cheer,—
I forgot 'twas dead o' year.

Swung the latch upon the wind,
Loud one called my name;
Seeking gentle Love to find
Neighbor Duty came,
Set a candle's steady beam,
Whirled the wheel and broke the dream.

One went forth and spake no word
—Dark the night and keen,—
One went forth, 'twas all unheard,
Ay, and all unseen,
In the dawn my wheel it whirled,
Bright the hearth and clean;—
But one stayeth alway here,
Duty bides. 'Tis dead o' year.

HUMOR

He who seeks to know me well
Looks not for the cap or bell;
He who seeks to know me better
Learns me not by line or letter;
He who holds my wings in thrall
Never looked for me at all.

UNITY

A sombre pine is stirred
By the recreant wind on high,
And out of the gloom, like a word,
Breaketh a bird to the sky.

The sky speaks truth through a star,
The star seeks the heart of the sea,
To the sea strives a river afar,
To the river a brook laughs free,

And down to the brook doth gleam
The thread of a mountain spring,
Born in the hush of that pine-tree's dream,
And brushed by the bird's soft wing.

THE PINES

From their still cloister, whose light
Falls like a spell upon the heart,
Wherein all sound and scent and sight
Hath left each but its spirit's part,

Back to the noisy world we turn
As those who strive to face the sun,—
The morns that jar, the noons that burn,
The days that herald deeds undone.

But walk we softer for that shrine,
And smile at Care's stern unrelease,
For thought of one, far wind-tossed pine,
Tells of its courage and its peace.

A FROZEN SPRING

Lone Winter trails his cloak across the hill,
Looks back and leaves the mute mask of his face
Caught in the hollow, sullen, gray and still,
And veils the desolation of the place
With a sharp breath of bitter, brief regret;
But we who saw an earlier mystery
Of thorny vine and ferny brink, and fret
Of soft-spun grass, and glimpse of crystal sky,
Know that a song lies pent beneath this hush,
A song of unforgotten things and sweet,—
The year's white birth, the first notes of the thrush,
Red dawns and April's yellow sunsets fleet;
So, 'neath the mask of age, lies hid Time's truth,
The throbbing, hoping, singing heart of Youth.

LET ME NOT BE TOO SURE

Let me not be of life's bequest too sure,
Nor hazard on a frail tomorrow's light,
But answering day's behest forget its lure,
Lest there shall rise no stars upon my night;
Let me not rest on joy's improvidence,
Nor build upon the fabric of a dream,
Nor time's irrevocable coin cast hence,
However near its fair fulfilment seem;
Thou, who alone hast ward of certainties,
Let me not spend of gift or grace too soon,
Nor squander any sweet that therein lies,
But for high service keep the utmost boon,
Lest I shall be too sure,—or seek to prove,
And break the alabaster box of love!

ONE, NAMED MARY

The children played in a garden,
In the garden the little ones played,
But one, named Mary, wandered apart
Into the silent shade.
One, named Mary, a little child,
Alone in the shadow strayed.

And they called to her with laughter;
"Of what art thou afraid?"
But she wept, and weeping lingered,
Yet knew not why she stayed,—
One, named Mary, a little child
Under a thorn-tree's shade.

ADVENT

Be thou the field, O heart,
Whereon His star hath shone,
While they of humble part
Tended their flocks alone.

And thou the manger poor,
O mind, in waiting be!
And thou, O soul, the open door,
Lest He shall come to thee.

O heart and soul and mind,
Thy little all unfold,
That even in thee He find
Some mite of myrrh and gold.

THE DREAM

In the night, the night and the dark,
I dreamed me a dream.
What that its hope lay stark
With the dawn's first gleam?
What that I closed its eyes
And went my way?
All through the calm, the wise,
The passionless day,
I smiled at the glamor called light,
So cold did it seem,
And followed a ray from the night,
From the dark, from the dream.

THE PILGRIM

Love, 'tis a strange and a perilous path—
I have trod this way before—
The pitiless rock and the thorn it hath,
The gloom and the closed door;
There is dawn that yearns, there is dusk that grieves—
Ay, well does Love know all!—
The chill of doubt and the heart's bruised leaves,
And the soul's unanswered call.

Mayhap thou shalt thirst where no fountains are—
Love fareth on joy and pain!
And thy desert nights shall be void of a star—
Love's vigils are not in vain;
Ay, though more bitter each mortal breath,
The dream it is sweet, is sweet,
Though its day be woe and its night be death,
Thou canst not stay Love's feet,
Thou canst not stay Love's feet!

REVELATION

"O mother! I dreamed of a little, fair child, in the dark, tonight."

But the mother she folded him close to her breast,
and swathed him so warm and so white;

"O mother! . . . I hear the lowing of kine beyond in the stable bare! . . ."

"Nay, child, the viols and flutes are fine and the pomegranate blossoms are fair."

"Mother, my mother, I dreamed again, that down in the market-place,

Wanders a child with eyes of pain, and grief in his lovely face!

With never a rest for his little, white feet, nor a place for his weary head,

I would go, I would go to the child so sweet, and bring him to my white bed!"

"Nay, sleep, my son, for the hour is late; there are none unhoused, unfed,

The watchman calls from the city gate, and the feast of the Inn is spread."

"O listen! . . . My mother, I hear a song so sweet and strange on the wind!

O let me but go to the throng below, that wandering child to find!"

"Hush, little one, sleep! 'Tis the viol again, all children
 are sheltered and warm;
 For dew lies white on Bethlehem's plain as thou
 on thy mother's arm;
 The shepherds are guarding their little soft sheep
 and the skies so silent are,"—
 But the child of the Inn, he smiled in his sleep;
 "O mother! . . . The Star! . . . The
 Star! . . . "

LET ME BELIEVE

When boughs are shaken of bloom, and dead leaves
 drifting, too,
 I would recall their first perfume and the sunlight
 sifting through;
 When fields lie barren without and the bitter nights
 are come
 Bid me not hear the winds of doubt, that through
 the darkness roam.

When hours are dim and gray, and the song of the
 year is sung,
 Leave me the hope of a dawning day in a heart that
 is young, is young!
 Though Hope be a blossom whirled, and Time doth
 pillage and win,
 Let me harken the pulse of the world and learn of
 truth therein.

*Ay, though my dreams shall pale, while night but an
 ember lures,
 Let me believe, though its light shall fail, that love,
 that love endures!*

THE LOST SONG

I, a lad, once long ago, followed those who tended
sheep

On the plains, and laid me low with the little ewes
to sleep.

Spake a shepherd; "Play, lad, play! Pipe thy tune
that we may hark."

But I hid my pipe away, in the dew and in the dark;

Hid my pipe and hid my face, feigning sleep but mus-
ing still

How a new tune I should trace, ere dawn crept above
the hill,

For no pipe so keen as mine, and no music were so
clear,

All the shepherds spake it fine, told my playing far
and near;

What that I were but a lad? With my note of dark
and dew,

Though the pipe were all I had, magic from the night
I drew.

Song of wind in olive leaves, murmuring of moun-
tain stream,

Whisper of ungarnered sheaves . . . all of this
my pipe did seem

When the shepherds silently kept their starry vigils
long

While we wrought, my pipe and I, of the dark and
dew a song.

It was long, ay, long ago . . . was it but a dream
I had,

That my pipe, I loved it so, when I was a shepherd
lad?

*"Harken, lad! . . . Art playing now?" but again
I said them Nay.
If 'twere not thy pipe and thou, whence the music
far away?"*

But I said them not a word, for the wonder every-
where,
For the glory that occurred, for the music in the air;
Knelt the shepherds, fearful they, but mine eyes I
opened not;
Prone upon the earth I lay, smote my brow upon that
spot.

Cared not I for that which came, if I dreamed or if
I slept,
For song wrapped me as a flame, melody rejoiced
and wept;
All the music of the spheres, all the songs that
Heaven had
Sang together in my ears,—I, a little shepherd lad!

And the Souls of Song they swept singing Heaven's
portals through,
Cared not I what watch they kept, only this my spirit
knew,
Only this,—to hold that strain in my heart forever-
more
That I should—ah, youth is vain!—play its music
o'er and o'er.

It was long ago . . . the skies reached in silence,
stars waxed dim.
Spake the trembling shepherds, "Rise! Let us go and
worship Him!"

But my pipe I loved it best, passed the shepherds one
by one,
And, that song within my breast, stayed I in the
dark alone,

To my lips the pipe I laid. . . . Surely I that
music knew,—
Was I trembling and afraid, in the dark and in the
dew?—
Surely I remembered yet, and could play its very
strain,
If I died could I forget?—Ay, but youth is vain, is
vain! . . .

In the night, that night I fled, panting, breathless,
pressing far
Whitherto my shepherds led under one undying Star,
Mad was I,—for youth is blind—as I prest the night-
time through
Meaning of that Song to find, that my pipe should
play it, too. . . .

I am old . . . 'Twas long ago. . . . Still I
see that sacred place,
Hoary shepherds bending low, and the silent
Maiden's face. . . .
O the hush, melodious, strong!—I was unafraid and
glad,
O the Meaning of the Song!—I no more was but a
lad,
For I found, but knew it not. And He was so sweet,
so sweet,
That my pipe lay all forgot, fallen, broken, at His
feet.

ON A JUDEAN HOUSE-TOP

"The eyes of the child wax dim, my lord; is there none, is there none to save?"

"The doves are slain and the lamb is burned; such as I had I gave."

"Lift up thy face and behold, my lord, how chill and white is his brow!"

"I would blinded be that I may not see the death of my first-born now."

"Nay, beat thy breast, cry aloud, my lord! Perchance thy God may hear!

Hath Judah another grief-torn mother so maddened by pain and fear?

I would that the maiden might return, who fared from our door this day!

Most sweet she smiled on my little child, most weary had been her way.

"Methinks she yearned with a mother's heart and plead with a mother's eyes;

It would ease my woe this night to know that sheltered somewhere she lies.

Behold yon light over Bethlehem's plain,—but the dark, the dark it is mine!

Now raise the child to the east, my lord, and pray thy God for a sign!

"If life shall come to the rose of my heart, ere the
eyes with death wax dim,
By yonder star, I shall know there are no gods for
our prayers save Him!
If life shall come to the blossom-like hands that
cling, that cling to my breast,
By the star, will I go to the city below and summon
that maid to rest!

"Behold, the babe is swathed in its light! 'T is a
sign, 't is a sign of grace!
His limbs are bathed in the beams of white, and he
smiles he smiles in my face!
There is wonder abroad in the night, my lord, and
strange is the sky afar!
Now God be praised, be praised for my child! He
sleeps in the light of the star!"

AT DUSK

Between this twilight and the morn
Years, like blown leaves may sweep away;
All life's stripped branches be unborne
And cast into the Sea of Day.

Then, little pulse beat soft and still,
Thou art a thread within the loom,
What matters, so thou dost but fill
The wheels within thy little room?

What matter that they reel or jar,
And that their tangles irk and fret?
They turn not long, they turn not far,
And suddenly, one morn—forget.

AT THE GATE

Nay: on thy lip a warning finger place
And stay thine eager steps. One moment wait
On hither side; one moment turn thy face
(Before thou shalt pass in and close the gate)
Back to the path by trembling Doubt made Sweet.
When yonder latch is lifted to thy hand,
The farthest limit prest by thy glad feet,
And in the temple of thy dreams they stand,
Thou'lt long for what uncertainty made dear,
And know that Pain, not Joy, hath made thee wise.
Above each gate flames Duty's sword; 'tis here
The radiance of thy one white moment lies.
Then linger to enshrine it; stay thy feet,
And live this hour by trembling Doubt made sweet!

THE MOTHER

"My sons, O Lord!—If Thou who gave
Shalt bid me be bereft,
Who knew a mother's heart, O Thou,
Save them from sin, and place them now,
Upon Thy right and left!"—

Up Time's rough steep, with feeble tread,
The mother toileth yet;
How many days? How many years?—
Who counts the rosary of tears
Knows where her feet are set.

Not for herself sweet Heaven she prays;
—God knows that on the day of days,
The prayer most self-forgetting, white,
The soul most radiant in His sight,
Will wear a mother's crown!—

Not for herself—up Time's rough steep
The mother toileth yet;
O wakeful nights and watchful years!—
Who counts the rosary of tears
Knows where her feet are set.

EXILE

I'd rather be hearing the sweep of the pines on the
hill,
Than all of your mad, night noises, mocking me so!
I'd rather be under the stars, shining steady and
still,
Than watching the glitter of lights here above and
below.

I'd rather be taking the old river path just begun,
With a glimmering candle afar making warmth in the
night,
Than here in the crowd, and not one,—O my heart,—
not one!
To turn all the longing to laughter, the gloom into
light!

The wave of my river were never so dark and so
cold
As the tide of the crowd and I in it, yet ever alone,
And I'd rather be eating a crust with her dear hand
to hold
Than wanting the bread of the heart, in a city of
stone!

Take all of your maddening bells, and the mirth they
have rung,
And give me a voice that is far, a voice that is
dear,—
For the whisper of love can out-measure all songs
that are sung,
As one,—O my heart!—could out-number the multi-
tudes here!

O I know that the New Year is setting of hopes all
a-thrill,
And I know that the new world is young and is
brave and is bold,—
But I'd rather be hearing the sweep of the pines on
the hill,
For love has a soil of its own, and memory still
Thanks God for the Old!

THE RACE

(65 A.D.)

Nay, hold me not and bid me not look back,
A sun-gleam strikes yon golden minaret,
He who would win must bound upon the track
Unloosed of old regret!

Behold! My limbs are white within the dawn,
And like a bird that breaks the eastern sky,
My heart, with wings of flame is speeding on,
Beyond the trumpet's cry.

Then stay me not, beloved. Bid me free
Of all past dark; its cloak I cast away,
And thus unbound, saving by love of thee,
I leap into the day!

Not Cæsar nor the gods can strike me blind
Of this Today, wherein life's treasure lies;
Harken! . . . Forgetful of the things behind,
I press unto the prize!

THE BOW-BRICK BELLS

(TO L. R. C.)

I heard the bells of Bow-Brick Hill a-ringing out so
clearly,
I heard the bells of Bow-Brick Hill all in the morn-
ing early;
They rang so far, they rang so near, they called the
loitering lasses,
Their notes swept high across the sky and swept the
meadow grasses;

O blithesome bells of Bow-Brick Hill!—The world
to work was hieing,
While in and out and all about the meadow larks
came flying,
While here and there and everywhere a brier bloom
was smiling
With bird and bee and hedge and tree the sweet of
year beguiling.

I heard the bells of Bow-Brick Hill all in the soft
dusk fleeting,
When home again by hedge and lane came each one
with his sweeting;
Round ivied wall and chimnies tall the swallows
black were flying,
And hushed across a dimming world, the Bow-Brick
Bells were dying.

The tender bells, the thrilling bells,—o'er reedy marsh
and meadow
They swept the day a long caress and sung it into
shadow,
Till through the tower, through the dusk and
through the heart came creeping
The echo of the Bow-Brick Bells that crooned a
world to sleeping.

BIRD SONG

I'm a merry vagabond, I'm a reckless rover!
Give me but a hedge row, give me but a tree,
Mine is the shy grass, mine the lissome clover,
Mine the blue, untravelled far, the hilltop dim and
free.

Everyone his song has, mine is but of gladness;
Little wit or wisdom, mayhap, when all is told,
But if thine is weary, if it smack of sadness,
Take a note of mine along, 'twere worth its weight in
gold.

All the world is orchestra to this reckless rover,
And half of all my having were wealth enough for
me,—
Mine the stream's clear heart, where lonely pines
brood over,
And mine the secret throbbing at the heart of every
tree.

THE GHOST

That little maid (Myself) I met,—was it in dreams
we played?—

White April spun its lacy net, the timid, budding
boughs were yet

Too tender green for shade;

"Sweetheart," quoth I, "where hast thou been so long
away from me?"

Oft as the boughs turned white and green, thy like
in daffodils I've seen

And yet I saw not thee."

Wondering she looked. I sighed; "Alas, hast thou
forgotten, too?"

Forgot our fairies in the grass and how we knelt to
hear them pass

Amid the dusk and dew?

Our castle and our wood-bird's call,—these, these hast
thou forgot?

The pebbles near the mill-stream's fall?—"Nay,
nay," spake she, "I know them all,

But thy face, I know not."

"Child, child, thou art that self I had, thou shalt not
go!" I cried.

"Ah, no," she said, "for I am glad, whilst thou art
strange and old and sad;

Mine is the green world wide!"—

That little maid (Myself) alone sped through sweet
April's light,

Into a world all pristine sown with Spring's nativity
new-blown

And never hint of night.

And I?—Face from the sun's red flame that smote
white April's spears
I lay and dreamed; nor called her name that time
she went . . . God knows there came
No sound, save that of tears.

DAWN ON THE SEA

A cry rolls in from the tumultuous deep;
"Make way! Make way! The mighty rideth on!"
But earth awakes not from her flowery sleep
Till floats the flaming banner of the dawn;
"Make way! Make way!"—It is a ghostly cry;
A king in exile moaneth in a dream,
He sees his chariots roll against the sky,
Ten thousand spears upon his pathway gleam;
He wrestles with the wind and smites the shore,
His heart girt round with maddening prison bands;
But lo, a silver gull is skimming o'er
The waking waves that lap the soft-lipped sands;
Back rolls that cry, mocked by a new-born light;
The meadows, smiling, slip from out their night.

YOUTH

Out of the heart there flew a little singing bird
Past the dawn and the dew, where leaves of morning
 stirred,
And the heart which followed on, said; "Though the
 bird be flown
Which sang in the dew and the dawn, the song is
 still my own."

Over the foot-worn track, over the rock and thorn,
The tired heart looked back to the olive leaves of
 morn,
To the fair lost fields again, and said; "I hear it! Oh,
 hark!"—
Though the bird were long since slain, though the
 song had died in the dark.

AN OLD STREET

The Past walks here, noiseless, unasked, alone;
Knockers are silent, and beside each stone
Grass peers, unharmed by lagging feet and slow
That with the dawn and dark pass to and fro.
The Past walks here, unseen forevermore,
Save by some heart who, in her half-closed door,
Looks forth and hears the great pulse beat afar,—
The hum and thrill and all the sounds that are,
And listening remembers, half in fear,
As a forgotten tune re-echoes near,
Or from some lilac bush a breath blows sweet
Through the unanswering dusk, the voiceless street,—
Looks forth and sighs,—with candle held above,—
"It is too late for laughter,—or for love."

A BAS-RELIEF

Pales, smiling upon the wall, touched by firelight's
subtle guise,
Methinks that under your beauty's thrall, memory
grows more wise;
For lo, it learns how at dusk you came threading the
soft Italian grass,
While shepherds, marking your torch's flame, mar-
velled to see you pass;

How one there was who piped so sweet he told
the music your passing made,
And melody haunting your flying feet fled the elusive
shade,
A song so keen that it outlived all,—war and ruin
and blood and tears,
Attic's towers and Roma's wall, and the dust of pil-
laging years;

Lived, endured and found its own,—one long since
with his hand in clay,—
Who paused and harkened, as we have done, to the
note of a by-gone day,
Harkened and knew your speeding grace, he with
heart by the gods made mad,
Knew your immortal eyes, your face, worked in the
sun and was glad;

Wrought for his temple and his day,—what keep we
of the little we do?—
Even as we, he went his way, but had seen his Pales,
too.

His fame, a breath; your doom, to sleep a thousand
years under Roman dust,
But Beauty's promise is given to keep though chariot
wheels be rust.

Behold, you reveal us each fair part,—the hillside
fires of spice and yew,
Your gentle flocks, your tender art, your happy
shepherds true;
That you never lived, knew bliss or tears, let the wise
decree or the sage deride,
Beauty that fled through a thousand years enough
that you never died!

A BUTTERFLY

Baffled by wind and beaten by the sea,
Drenched wings, dim record of a radiant hour,
Wrought of the light, the dew, the waving flower,
Thy mellow, sun-swept spaces made thee free;
But beckoned by a wave of amethyst,
When sunset's rose lay shaken on the shore,
Its petals' fiery opaline blown o'er
The soft-lipped sands, which they had warmly
kissed,
Thou—born of frailer blossom's fleeting breath,
Taught of the sun to soar unto the steep,—
Didst flutter to the beauty of the deep,
And feed upon the white foam-flowers of death;
No more for thee fair lesser fields lie ripe,—
Alas, the heart, thy human prototype!

THE INSIDIOUS BEGGAR

A little blind boy came knocking, when bitter and
long the night,
And he said: "Let me in for every one's mocking.
They say it is foolish and perfectly shocking—
My pitiful want of sight.

"And yet I can shoot an arrow,"—he rapped, "I pray
that you hark.

Its flight is swift as that of a sparrow,
Its dart can pierce to your very marrow,
And I never have missed my mark.

"If I am blind, how can I be knowing the way this
night unto you?

There's never a beacon set for my showing,
And yet I can tell, past all foregoing,
That the shade of your eyes is blue.

"If I am blind, how may I be telling that nowhere
else on the earth

Save in your heart can I make my dwelling,
Whither my feet have been impelling
Since the swift, sweet hour of my birth?"

The little blind boy ceased knocking, for the door it
opened—'t is true;

And he laughed: "One thing,—lest the door you'd
be locking,—

One thing I've to tell,—it is perfectly shocking,—
I am blind unto all save you!"

LEISURELY LANE

Is there no road now to Leisurely Lane?—We travelled it long ago;
A place for the lagging of leisurely steps, sweet and shady and slow,
With rims of restful hills beyond, and fields of dream-ful wheat,
With shadows of clouds above them blown, and poppies asleep at our feet.

There lads and maids on a Sunday met and strolled them two and two,
The leaves they met in a roof o'erhead, and only the sun peered through,
And there was time to gather a rose, and time for the wild-bird's call,
And plenty of time to sit by a stream and harken its ripple and fall.

Is there no road now to Leisurely Lane?—*God knows we have wandered afar!*
There was once a lamp through the brooding dusk, and over the tree a star,
There was once a breath of the clover bloom—*sweet Heaven have we hurried so long!*—
And there was a gate by a white rose clasped, and out of the dusk a song.

That song . . . the echo is strange and sweet,
the voice it is weak and old. . . .
It has no part with this fierce, wild rush and this hard, mad fight for gold!

It has no part with the clamor and din, the jarring
of wheel and stone —
O listen, my heart, and forget,—forget that we reap
the bread we have sown!

Is there no road now to Leisurely Lane,—where lin-
gering, one by one,
The summoning bells of twilight-time over the
meadows blown
May find us, strolling our homeward way, glad of the
evening star?
Is there no road now to Leisurely Lane?—*God knows*
we have hurried afar.

B A L M

After the sun, the shade,
Beatitude of shadow,
Dim aisles for memory made,—
And Thought;
After the sun, the shade.

After the heat, the dew,
The tender touch of twilight;
The unfolding of the few
Calm Stars;
After the heat, the dew.

After all, there is balm;
From the wings of dark there is wafture
Of sleep, night's infinite psalm,—
And Dreams;
After all there is balm.

A R T

A white moth wing in the candlelight
A butterfly blue in the sun,
A song that lives or dies in a night,
They are all one, all one.

For the white moth wing may waft a thought,
The butterfly touch the blue
Ere it fail, and the spirit of song be fraught
With an echo for you, for you.

Then song be forgot, or wing be burned
Each shall have had its day,
The flight to the sun and the lesson learned
Even in God's old way.

U L T I M A T U M

This earthly house shall be set right,
The shutters they shall close;
Then comes no sound, nor touch, nor sight,
Nor scent of any rose;
Only the dark by nothing vext,
And of that thing which waiteth next,—
God knows.

IN TUNE

Like to the bee, that saves its treasured sweet,
From summer's feet,
I fain would draw from every radiant flower
My little hour;
Like to the tree that cradled songs of spring
Yet saw each thing
Fly hence and leave it voiceless to stand
'Neath the wind's hand;
I, harboring some melody once strong,
—Even unuttered song,—
Though summer's note be silent, June's rose past,
Would keep the heart in tune until the last.

INTERLUDE

Alike to grief, to joy, to thrill of song,
To all the sweet futility of fears,
To pain of singing or to rapture strong.
To tremulo of hope or gift of tears
Comes silence;—sweet amid the fire of morn
Is singing, and beneath while blossoms' fall,
But silence, mother of all beauty born,
Shrines in a hush the tenderest note of all.
As unto day, dusk brings beatitude,
To life is silence warder of the best;
O in Time's silent dusk, past tumult rude,
Past all regretting's bound or sad unrest,
Love, gather to thy heart some thought that be
Through winnowing of years, the best of me!

THE GREATER LOSS

One spoke with tears: "Grief stripped me of the best,
For on my lips smiles are forever dead,
My heart is but an empty, songless nest—
Laughter is fled."

One spoke and smiled: "Grief robbed of all, for I,
Facing the lonely desert of my years,
Shudder to find its one spring hath gone dry—
I have no tears."

BABYHOOD

The secret of all Glory, He,
Upon that first, great night,
Hid where no man might henceforth see
Nor read a star aright.

The secret of all Wonder, He,
Upon that first, great day,
Within the bosom of the sea
Encompassed for aye.

The secret of all Beauty, He,
Upon that pristine morn,
Closed from all questioning to be
In the first flower born.

And lo, of these His secrets three,
Sealed by a hush divine,
We, all unworthy, find the key
Within this hand of thine.

AROUND THE FIRE

When we get round the fire at night,
We three, while Granny knits and knits,
The big wood-fire 's our only light,—
The corner's dark where Granny sits.
But then her needles gleam and click,
And then we hear the great clock tick
Louder than when the sun shines bright.

And my! but Granny tells us tales,
You ought to hear about a boat
That came one night—it had no sails,
Nor anything—right in our bay!
And there 's another 'bout the day
Gran'father lost his wedding coat!

And Joey, when he keeps awake,
Is always asking her to tell
About the wolves that tried to break
Into the old school-house one time,
And then the Dominie had to climb
'Way up outside and ring the bell!

But when the other tales are done,
Then it is Cicely's delight
To hear about the little son
Who went to sea.—We always say
It 's better 'n any time o' day,
When we get round the fire at night!

CHILDREN

We are but children, with a work and playtime,
A little hour for laughter and for tears,
A little clinging to the waning daytime,
A little yielding unto futile fears

We are but children, filling Time's great measure,
Breaking a toy to weep when it is done;
Forth from morn's meadows do we reap of pleasure
Little to bear hence at set of sun.

We are but children, weary with pursuing,
Building awhile beside the Bar of Pain;—
Lord, in life's dusk, forget Thou all misdoing,
And gather us unto Thy heart again!

UPSTAIRS

We mount the way to mother's room
For benediction waiting there,—
Her face, that crowns the twilight gloom
Above the stair.

We mount the way to mother's God,
Led by a benison of prayer
Step upon step, where she hath trod
Up life's steep stair.

WHEN AT THE LAST

When at the last I lay me down to sleep,
And of the morrow's dawning reckon not,
When night no more, no more may vigil keep
And love's brief noon is but a dream forgot,
Back to the Past, its sad and variant ways,
Be Thou the warder of my yesterdays.

Amid the paths long lost, or sought too late,
Where waywardness hath wandered, love been blind,
If there be one that lieth clear and straight,
Unseen, perchance forgot, Thou mayest find
Even in that perverse, perplexing maze,
A white thread shining 'mid my yesterdays.

So oft hath love's torch wavered, love's feet failed,
Were the vain reckoning mine 'twere but to weep;—
Blind Thou the sight by memory assailed
When at the last, I lay me down to sleep,
And through Time's deep and labyrinthian ways
Crown Thou some moment in my yesterdays!

A CHILD'S GOODNIGHT SONG

Goodnight birds, goodnight my singers,
Silence, all skylarks and thrushes!
Songs are sweeter for the hushes.
Goodnight bees and blossom-ringers!

Goodnight—stream,—I hear you plashing!
In the moonlight running riot,
Making all the dark more quiet,—
Stars unto your stars are flashing,
Goodnight. stream, I hear you plashing!

Goodnight grasses, goodnight clover!
Soon the dawn-wind shall awake you;
Let its swinging cradle take you,
All the sky's a spangled cover!

Goodnight, mother,—goodnight, sweet one;
By my bed, bend now above me,
Eyes but two more stars that love me,
—Hurry day! Night, be a fleet one!—
Goodnight, mother,—goodnight, sweet one.

LONGER POEMS

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THE WITCH

(Salem, 1692.)

And was it I, long, long ago, who sate within the door
and spun?
I mind the hazel boughs ablow waved yellow in the
setting sun,
And my blind mother's voice within, "Come, daugh-
ter, set aside thy wheel,
Methinks the darkness doth begin, or muttering of
storm I feel.

'Twould seem the Bird of Fear somewhere, doth
spread its wings upon the skies."
"A thrush, my mother, sings in air, and to our elm
the swallow flies,"
'Twas thus I spake to her,—alack!—while reaching
straight unto our sill,
The shadows of three crosses black stretched down
from Gallows Hill.

"Daughter, I hear the tramp of feet that draw them
slowly, strangely nigh"—
"The wind, my mother, stirs the wheat, and yonder
mill-stream rusheth high,"
'Twas thus, ay, it was thus, I spake, whilst harkening
a far-off sound
Like to a mighty wave that brake, and beat upon the
ground.
Nearer, and still more near it drew, a darkly
threatening, muttering throng,
Louder the direful purpose grew, which swept their
steps along,—

*"The Witch! The Witch! Let her come hence!
 Accuse her ye who will!"*
*"Yon cross's shadow marks her whence it falls from
Gallows Hill!"*

Yet, at the sill my wheel it turned, my fingers flew
and spun apace,
But from the West the sunset burned above a watch-
ing face.
"Daughter, thy wheel I harken well; methinks
'twere time thy task was o'er,—
Alack, mine ears cannot foretell whose steps approach
the door!"

"Mother, our neighbors halt and pass, I bid them all
a right good-day."
"Nay other feet are on the grass, and storm is
threatening far away."
Outside that door they gathered round,—it were full
strange a sight, I ween!
—The murmuring of gloomy sound, the rope they
bare between,—

And one stepped forth with lifted hand, and held
a written paper high,
Pointing to where that cross did stand against a
darkening sky.
Then twirled my wheel, and singing I did close the
door, the latch let fall,
And past the hazel waving high, went forth to face
them all.

The aspect stern, the bitter will,—their menace yet
ofttimes I see,—
And twixt us, from the darkening hill, shadows of
crosses three,
And in mine ears, as far away, where dusk crept
gentler, softlier dim,
My mother's voice, at close of day, crooning her
evening hymn.

Then spake the first, full harsh and stern; "The
Council hath adjudged it right
That ere yon sun to rest shall turn, and ere another
night,
That ere again disaster dire shall terror spread by
land or sea,
From evil spell, by rope or fire, our soil shall be
free!"

"Good sirs!" quoth I, "'twere right and well, if sin
or mischief have been done,
But they who in this cottage dwell, have taken and
have asked of none;
My mother, she is blind and old, of gentle will, and
kindly deeds,
Her draught of herbs that asks not gold, is balm for
many needs.

Well versed in wind and tide is she, as the good
sailor-folk maintain,
And woe unto the boat at sea, which she hath bade
remain!"

"*Enough!—The maiden hath confessed!*" "*To death
with evil!*" "*Triumph right!*"
Now God have mercy for the thing that smote my
brain and sight!

The coiling rope! . . . The cross of black! . . .
Upon my soul they brake them plain,
One bearing faggots in their track. . . .The angry
cries that rose again. . . .
*"The Witch! . . . The Witch! . . . She
dwelleth here!" "The Woman with the Evil
Eye!"*
*"No more unrighteous power we'll fear! "Now bring
her forth and let her die!"*

"What mean ye men?—No witch is here! What
came ye hitherward to find?
None save my mother, threescore year, a woman old
and blind
Is 'neath yon roof!—If on her name some idle tongue
hath cast a slur,
Let him come forth, and to his shame learn of the
fair deeds done by her!"

"Silence!" spake one, "No more shall we be wrought
upon by evil might!
On yonder hill shall judgment be before another
night!"
*"She did predict the storm which wrought disaster
sore on land and sea!"*
*"Her hazel is with magic fraught!" "To death with
such as she!"*

"Away! Ye know not what ye do! It is my mother
sits within!
Stricken and old,—now whence come you to reckon
where there is no sin?
Ay, blind is she, yet knoweth well of weather and of
tide, indeed,
And to the sailor-folk can tell when they should stay
or speed!"

"Twas thus I cried in terror sore. Two stepped them
forth and drew anigh
Bearing a rope. They muttered o'er, "*Perish the Evil
Eye!*"
Back to the threshold straight I sprang, mine arms
thrown out across that door,
Within, my mother softly sang a homely tune of
yore.

The hazel rods were torn aside, and hands unpitying
fell on mine,
"Now God above!" I madly cried, "A sign! send
down a sign!"
And if the woe of one maid's cry pierced to high
Heaven, 'tis God who knows!
A crash of thunder smote the sky, and lo, a mighty
storm arose,

Furious and frenzied, lashed and tore the smitten
branches to the ground,
The faces turned unto that door grew ashen at the
awful sound,
A writhing tongue of livid flame, a cry that rent the
fiery cloud,
A roar, a mighty crash there came, then darkness in
a smoking shroud.

And lo, my mother at my side. . . . "My child, if
any wander near
Bid them within, from wind and tide, we have no
cause to fear.
For One alone the sky enfolds, and One alone the
sea and land,
The fury of the storm He holds within the hollow of
His hand!" . . .

.

'Mid silence strange the rain beat down, strangely
the darkness broke away,
And rolled from off the hilltop's crown, pierced by
the sun's last ray,
And lo, across that door was cast, with mighty arms
flung out to save,
The elm tree smitten by the blast, routed from out its
grave.

And they whose purpose had been set to a fell deed,
a work of woe,
(Ay, in my dreams I see them yet, when the wild
wind doth blow!)
Forth from that place in mortal dread as though
Death hunted in their track,
The dark, accusing throng had fled, nor stayed to
look them back.

.
And was it I, long, long ago, who to the dawn did
set my face?
I mind the hazel buds ablow, made sweet the storm-
spent place,
I mind my mother's gentle hand full trustingly in
mine held fast,
Nor knew she,—save of storm-wrecked land,—that
thing which now is past;

Nor how when at early day, I urged her steps with
eager will,
Fragments of crosses strewn our way, washed down
from Gallows Hill;

Naught save that troublous times and sore drove us
from there afar to dwell,
Nor as the years passed gently o'er, knew she of what
befell,—
Nay, nor at last, when peacefully, her blind eyes
closed, her hand sought mine,
Knew she of that dark eve gone by, when God in
mercy sent a sign.

THE LOW-SHORE LASS

Flower of the mint-stalk, tassel of the grass,
Bent and brushed the knees of her—the Low-Shore
lass;

Herbs within her homespun, arms full, too—
Rosemary, marjoram, lavender and rue.
All things that keep the earth wholesome, young and
sweet

Fell about the shore lass and brushed her bare feet.

Brake a runner through the reeds at a fearful pace,
Sprang among the fair herbs, fell upon his face—
“Now in mercy cover me!—Hark! They run me
down!

Weave, maid, above me green stalks and brown!
An’ they question, Hast thou seen any pass the way?
For my life, and in God’s name, tell them nay!”

Dim mist and white sail, grim wall and brown;
Spires burning sunwise in the gray sea town;
Beating hoof and ringing spur; scarlet breaking
through,

Sabre gleam—and red-coat, and panting steed, too.
Knee-high in mint flowers stood a shore lass,
Down unto the little waves tossed her orchard grass,
Shaken steed and tight rein, and fierce faces bent—
“Maid, hast thou a runner seen, and which way he
went?

“A prisoner at large we seek; a lord of France
is he”—

“Then fights he with my countrymen!” the slim
maid, spake she;

"So, had I seen thy lord of France, or knew I his
name,

Thinkest I should tell to thee whither way he came?
I am but a shore lass—" Oh, smiled and dimpled
she—

"But whoso fights for my good land, he fights for me.
"I spied, sirs, but a sailor lad"—she gave smile for
frown—

"Who got him upward with the tide, and then he got
him down."

"The sailor lad! Now hasten, lass! Whence hath
he gone?

Mayhap he spied our prisoner all in the early dawn!"
She gathered the sweet lavender from out her home-
spun gown—

"He got him up, sirs, with the tide, and then he got
him down.

And this is all, for of thy war what might a shore
lass know?

Yet take these stalks, good sirs, that from an English
bush did grow."

Doffed plume and dewy herbs; passed the fierce face;
Rang the spur and beat the hoof hard on their chase;
Gold sun upon the spires, crimson on the grass.
Knee-high in mint flowers stood the shore lass;
Red-coat and sword hilt gleaming in the sun
Faded from her watching sight, one by one.

Up sprang that sailor lad, upon his knee he bent—
"I am he, the lord of France—'prisoned, hunted,
spent!

Thou hast saved me, maiden sweet, thine my life
shall be,

And he who for thy country fought, fights now for
thee!"

Fell a kiss upon her hand; wind shook the grass
(Fair as any water-bloom, that Low-Shore lass)
Fled the runner through the leaves; naught was there
to show—

Mint-stalk and lavender tossing to and fro,
Yellow-belted honey-bees in the sun that pass,
And—white arm shading her sweet eyes—a Low-
Shore lass.

Mint-stalk and marjoram, lavender and rue,
Whither passed the slim maid who once plucked you?
Yonder peers her pictured face—the fair dame and
tall—

Next a gallant lord of France, in the old hall,
Next a gallant lord of France who, 'mid the orchard
grass.

Won, all in a fleeting dawn, the Low-Shore lass.

THE BALLAD OF SWEET P

Mistress Penelope Penwick, she
Called by her father, "My Sweet P,"
Painted by Peale, she won renown
In a clinging, short-waisted satin gown;
A red rose held by her finger-tips,
And a smile held back from her roguish lips.

William Penwick, the jolly wight,
In clouds of smoke, night after night,
Would tell a tale in delighted pride,
To cronies who came from far and wide,
Always ending,—with candle he,—
"And this is the picture of My Sweet P!"

The tale?—'Twas how Sweet P did chance
To give to the British a Christmas dance.
Penwick's house an outpost stood,
Flanked by the ferry, and banked by the wood;
Hessian and British quartered there
Swarmed through chamber and hall and stair.

Fires ablaze and candles bright,
Soldier and officer feasted that night.
The enemy?— Safe, with a river between,
Black and deadly and fierce and keen,
A river of ice and a blinding storm,—
So they made them merry and kept them warm.

But while they mirth and roistering made
Up in her dormer window stayed
Mistress Penelope Penwick apart,
With fearful thought, and sorrowful heart.
Night after night her candle's gleam
Had sent through the dark its hopeful beam;

But the nights they came and passed again
With never a sign from her countrymen;
For where beat a heart so brave, so bold,
As to baffle the river's bulwark cold?
Penelope's eyes and her candle's light
Were mocked by the storm that Christmas night.

But harken! Sudden a missile stung
And shattered her casement pane, and rung
At her feet! 'Twas a word from the storm outside.
She opened her dormer window wide,
A wind-swept figure halted below,
The ferryman, old and bent and slow,
And a murmur rose upward, only one,
Thrilling and powerful,—

"Washington!"

.
With jest and laughter and candles bright,
It was two by the stairway clock that night
When Penelope Penwick tripped her down,
Dressed in the short-waisted satin gown;
With a red rose cut from her potted bush;—
There fell on the rollicking crowd a hush.

And she stood in the soldiers' midst, I ween,
The daintiest thing they e'er had seen!
She swept their gaze with her eyes most sweet,
And patted her little slippered feet;
"'Tis Christmas night, sirs," quoth Sweet P,
"And I wish to dance!—Will you dance with me?"

O but they cheered! Ran to and fro,
Each for the honor bowing low;
But with smile and charm and witching grace
She chose him pranked with officer's lace,
And shining buttons, and dangling sword,—
I'll warrant he strutted him proud as a lord!

Doffed was enmity, donned was glee,—
O she was charming, that Sweet P!
When it was over and blood aflame,
Came the eager cry, "A game!" "A game!"
"We'll play at forfeits," Penelope cried,
"If one holds aught in his love and pride,

Let him lay it down at my feet in turn,
And a fine from me shall he straightway earn!"
What held each one in his love and pride?—
Quick flew a hand unto every side,
Each man had his sword and nothing more,
And the swords they clanged in a heap on the floor.

Standing there in her satin gown,
With candlelight on her yellow crown,
And at her feet was a bank of steel,—
I'll wager the look was caught by Peale!—
Penelope held her rose on high,
"I fine each one for a leaf to try!"

She plucked the petals and blew them out,
A rain of red they fluttered about
Over the floor and through the air,—
Rushed the officers here and there,
When hark! A cry! The door burst in!
"The enemy!"

Tumult, terror and din!

Flew a hand onto every side,—
Swords?—Penelope, arms thrown wide,
Leaped that heap of steel before,
The swords behind her upon the floor,
And faced her countrymen staunch and bold,
Who dared a river of death and cold,
Who swept them down on a rollicking horde
And found they never a man with sword!

And so it happened,—but not by chance
That in '76 was given a dance,
By a witch with a rose and a satin gown,
Painted in Philadelphia town,
Mistress Penelope Penwick, she
Called by her father "My Sweet P."

MOTHER

There came a day when cattle died
And every crop had failed beside,
And not a dollar left to show.
Then father said the place must go,
And all of us, we hated so
 To go tell Mother.

Behind the barn, there we three stood
And wondered which one of us could
Spare her the most—'tis easily said,
But we just looked and looked in dread
 At one another.

I spoke: "I'll trust to brother's tongue,"
But Father said, "No, he's too young;
I reckon I ----" He gave a groan:
"To know we've not a stick nor stone
 Will just kill Mother!

"Maybe a mortgage can be raised.
Here all her father's cattle grazed;
She loves each flower and leaf and bird—
I'll mortgage ere I'll say one word
 To Mother!"

Upon his hands he bowed his head.
And then a voice behind us said:
"Mortgage? And always have to pay?
Now, Father, I've a better way!"—
And there, between the ricks of hay,
 Stood Mother.

"I have been thinking, 'most a year,
We'd sell this place, and somewhere near
Rent a cottage small and neat,
And raise enough for us to eat,"
Said Mother.

"There's trouble worse than loss of lands.
We've honest hearts and willing hands,
And not till earth and roof and door
Can rob of peace, shall I be poor!"
She smiled. "It seems to me,
You all had better come to tea,"
Said Mother.

As through the sunset field astir
We three went following after her,
The thrushes they sang everywhere;
Something had banished all our care,
And we felt strong enough to bear
All things—with Mother.

And listen: Once there came a day
When troops returned from far away,
And every one went up to meet
His own, within the village street.
But ere he reached our old milestone
I knew that Father came alone—
And not with Brother.

Then through the twilight, dense and gray,
All that our choking sobs could say
Was—"Who'll tell Mother."

But waiting for us, by the wood,
Pale in the dusk, again she stood.
And then her arms round Father prest
And drew his head upon her breast: . . .
"The worst that comes is never Death,
For honor lived while *he* drew breath!"
Said Mother.

Often, when some great deed is cried
Of one, by flood or flame, who died,
Of men who sought and won their fame,
While all the land rings with some name
Or other,

I think me of a warfare long,
Of Marah's water, bitter, strong,
Of sword and fire that pierced the heart,
Of all the dumb, unuttered part,
And say, with eyes grown misty, wet
(Love's vision, that cannot forget),
"All heroes are not counted yet—
There's Mother."

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